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7.—*Phreno-Mnemotechny, or the Art of Memory; the Series of Lectures, explanatory of the Principles of the System, delivered in New York and Philadelphia, in the Beginning of 1844.* By FRANCIS FAUVEL GOURAUD, D. E. S., of the University of France. New York and London: Wiley & Putnam. 1845. 8vo. pp. 566 and xcvi.

THIS is one of the most remarkable books it has ever fallen to our lot to examine. In style, manner, and matter, it will hereafter rank among the most curious of the curiosities of literature. Its great size is one of the smallest of its demands upon the attention of the learned world. In his "Ante-prædictum to the public," Professor Gouraud is candid enough to state that the argumentative parts of the following lectures were delivered extemporaneously, "without even any previous mental preparation." But we feel bound to say, that to take the *professor* at his word would be doing him a great injustice. He had made considerable mental preparation; he had studied the subject of artificial memory, and, according to his own account, made not a little progress in the practical application of its principles. He has certainly improved upon the schemes of Dr. Grey, "the illustrious vicar of Hinton," of Feinaigle and Aimé Paris, as we could show by comparing his "fundamental basis" (what basis is not fundamental?) with theirs, if he had not prudently threatened audacious copyists with the penalties of the law. The substance of the whole matter, however, in all these systems, is nearly the same; the leading idea is absolutely the same. In the "fundamental basis," certain letters are arranged to correspond to the numbers; and then the number of the date to be remembered is formed into a word, which word, it is supposed, may be more easily retained than the numerical sign. Gouraud's method is to find a word which has some analogy with the subject to be committed to memory, and then to form a sentence in which that word shall be introduced; the sentence also bearing upon the fact or event which it is designed to fix in the memory.

In order to facilitate the application of this system, Mr. Gouraud, it appears, has published a *phreno-mnemotechnic* dictionary. We have not seen this work, but suppose it contains a series of numbers arranged with the various corresponding words to facilitate the rapid *mnemonization* of facts. It is obvious that a work of this kind is quite necessary, if a person really means to use the system to any important extent. It would be a wearisome and even endless task to be left to search out words cor-

responding by their letters to all the numbers which one might desire to remember. With this apparatus it may sometimes be convenient to use the system for the purpose of remembering dates ; but in most cases, as it would be necessary to have the phreno-mnemotechnic dictionary at hand, the question naturally occurs, Why is it not just as well to have a chronological table, and turn to the dates whenever they are wanted ? In order to apply the principles of the system to any great advantage, a variety of things must be attended to and remembered. Though it may be easier to remember the mnemotechnic words, in many cases, than to remember the numbers represented, still, in a large body of facts and dates, there will be a large number of words and sentences to be imprinted on the memory by some method or other ; by some analogy or association by contrast, or by actually committing them to memory. And it is not at all likely that these words and sentences will remain long fixed, unless the association is frequently renewed, and the ground repeatedly gone over. This exercise may be a very good one in some respects for the memory ; and yet, to accustom the memory to depend on casual or indirect associations is to form a bad intellectual habit. The best memory is the natural memory, of course ; and in most men, practice and attention will strengthen and enlarge it to almost any extent. Depending on such artificial aids is like using crutches to support the body, or, at best, like riding on a velocipede ; a somewhat troublesome operation, that falls short of giving their appropriate exercise to the limbs, and, in the long run, and taking all things together, saves but little time and fatigue. It is a cumbrous contrivance to accomplish a very unimportant object.

To dignify such an arbitrary mnemonic arrangement, as the system either of Grey, Feinaigle, Aimé Paris, or *Professor Gouraud*, with the name of science, is to misuse language, and to play the charlatan. The art is an ingenious trick, a pretty contrivance, and sometimes useful for special purposes, but having about as much claim to the dignity of a science, as riddles, charades, and puns. It has not a single characteristic of a science, a single philosophical principle about it. It is a mere piece of adroitness ; and the most complete mastery of it has no tendency to improve the mind, exalt the imagination, or refine the taste. The attempt to introduce this or any other system of artificial memory into our systems of education is not very likely to be made ; but if it should be made, would do nothing but mischief.

The language which Mr. Gouraud applies to the persons who have, by successive steps, perfected this mnemonic sleight, is ludicrously exaggerated. Dr. Grey is the “illustrious and learned

rector of Hinton," to whom science is "indebted for a "gigantic impulse given to mnemotechnics." Feinaigle appeared in the "literary horizon," and his reputation "took a flight which soon raised him to fortune and consideration, and rendered his name immortal"; "he was borne to the clouds by the greater part of the journals," and his name was "sung by the alpha of modern English poets, Byron"; and yet, like Dr. Grey, he found a few "contemptible detractors," among whom we must reckon *Professor Gouraud* himself, who, with an amusing inconsistency, calls Feinaigle's system a "heterogeneous body, a veritable Sphynx, (meaning probably Sphinx), a monster," and all but a hippopotamus. Gouraud himself, in his distinguished boyhood, next figures upon the mnemonic stage; and the little autobiographical sketch with which we are furnished is one of the coolest pieces of self-complacency that the reader will find in the range of his researches. The following is a portion of it:—

"In the course of the year 1822, nearly three years had already elapsed since my *pelagian* tutor had initiated me into the doctrines of Feinaigle. While endeavouring to bring to perfection his beautiful idea, I had by turns visited India, Arabia, China, and South America; that is to say, all the principal seaports upon the coasts of these various countries. I had tasted the 'ambrosia of Constance,' and hunted the African ostrich at the Cape of Good Hope; breathed the perfumes of the incense upon the burning soil of Yenien; enjoyed the nectar of the coffee upon the sandy plains of Mocha; eaten the dates of Arabia in the tented streets of Muscat; languidly pillow'd my head upon the downy carpets of Teheran in the kiosks of Bassora, while inhaling the rosy attar of the harems beneath the shade of its perfumed acacias; admired the Asiatic splendors of Surat, Bombay, and Calcutta; hunted the hydrocorax and the paroquet through the forests of Malabar and Coromandel; attended the sacrifice of the Hindostan widow upon the funeral pile of her husband; fished up the pearls of the ancient Ormus upon the nacreous coasts of Ceylon; mounted the elephant of Seringapatam; bathed in the sacred waters of the Ganges, &c., &c., &c. . . . until the time when, guided by a benevolent Providence, I came to burn my roving wings in this focus of future liberty of the world, while awaiting the destined hour when at last, freed from its mortal envelope, my spirit, taking its last flight, shall depart on its eternal voyage. I came back, then, as I have said, from this splendid tour, loaded not only with precious souvenirs of the voyage, but with my memory enriched with a multitude of *facts* in statistics, geography, history, and the mathematics, which I had been fortunate enough to master during my long pilgrimage by the assistance of *my key*, modified from the fundamental basis of Feinaigle." — pp. 89, 90.

Mr. Gouraud's moral indignation is prompt enough, when any skeptic calls in question his own claims. The manner in which he deals with all such unbelieving dogs is marked by equal good-

temper, modesty, and refined taste. The objurgatory passages are brought in, with singular appropriateness, in the midst of the eloquent flights with which the lectures are diversified. For example, the modest and learned gentleman affirms, that "it would be as impossible to translate the system of Aimé Paris from the French to the English language, as it would be to extract an atom of honesty or decency from the joint bodies, brains, and shallow minds of those contemptible individuals, who once dared, with the hope of pilfering with impunity from the fruits of my labors, to speak of plagiarism concerning my system and that of Paris."

To give a more particular account of the contents of the volume; it consists of an "Ante-prædictum to the public"; "a few words to the friendly and intelligent members of my New York and Philadelphia classes"; an "Introduction," mainly historical, but diverging occasionally into the philosophical, wherein he requests of the reader's "longanimity" to wait for some future work before he passes judgment on the character of some of his propositions; and six lectures or lessons. A "General Dedication" to the memory of Colonel Stone, with a very bombastic letter to the same departed gentleman, precedes the whole. Each lecture is then separately dedicated to two persons, twelve fortunate individuals being thus mnemonized into immortality. Here is an economy of dedication,—taking two men to dedicate a single lecture to,—which does great credit to the ingenuity of the author. Besides the lectures, the flattering comments of the reporters are given; and, parenthetically, at the proper places, the various kinds and degrees of applause with which the speaker was received are carefully mentioned. Thus we have in the first lecture, on p. 112 (*applause*); on the same page (*bursts of hilarity*); again (*hilarity*); again (*prolonged and animated laughter*); on the next page (*approbation*), then (*deep attention*), then (*applause*);—on p. 114 (*loud applause*), and (*mirthful applause*), and finally (*interruptive applause*);—on p. 115 (*warm applause*), then (*prolonged laughter and loud applause*), (*loud cheering*), and (*applause*). On the next page the entertainment is varied with (*murmurs of assent*), (*laughter*), (*continued applause*); and on p. 117, we have a grand crash of (*tempestuous bursts of laughter, and prolonged hilarity*). And so it goes on. The reader will be struck with the fact, that these outbreaks of laughter, applause, and hilarity uniformly occur just after the professor has brought out some particularly intense piece of asinity.

It would be impossible to characterize adequately the absurdity of the style in which these lectures are written. To call it Sophomorical would be doing the greatest conceivable injustice to

the young gentlemen who are supposed to monopolize that particular manner; to speak of it as theatrical would be to libel the Crummleses of the stage. It is bombastic to the last degree of the ridiculous; wordy to an inconceivable extent; vulgar in its tawdriness, and disgusting in its affectation and pretence. The lectures abound in the most incoherent and absurd rhapsodies; in what "the learned call rigmarole"; and together with these are published all the exaggerated commendations of the newspaper press. The book has been thrust upon the public notice by a system of puffery which would discredit the author's illustrious namesake, the advertiser of the "Poudres Subtiles," or the still more illustrious vendors of Dr. Brandreth's pills. Indeed, a large portion of *Professor Gouraud's* volume belongs to the species of literature, which, in its higher departments, embraces those immortal advertisements. If the tasteless and utterly unfounded pretensions of this book, and the ludicrously exaggerated puffs it has received, are deserving of rebuke, the arrogant tone of the author himself ought to be met with a sterner reprobation. Flattered by the applauses of indiscriminating audiences in New York and Philadelphia, in which perhaps there was a vein of irony which he failed to perceive, he has had the vanity to speak of himself with an air that would have been unbecoming in a Newton, and of others who have questioned his foolish claims with an insolence for which it is not easy to find an epithet. A book so full of charlatanry as this, had it appeared in any other civilized country in Christendom, would have instantly encountered a storm of ridicule and contempt. It could not have survived the day of its birth.

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8.—*Epitaphs from the Old Burying-Ground in Cambridge. With Notes.* By WILLIAM THADDEUS HARRIS, Junior Sophister in Harvard College. Cambridge: John Owen. 1845. 12mo. pp. 192.

THE work of Old Mortality performed by an undergraduate in college! It is a pious office to render permanent the inscriptions on the gravestones of our fathers, and thus, as far as in one lies, to perpetuate the memory of their lives and virtues. To bring together these simple records, also, is a good deed for the future historian, enabling him to complete many a genealogical record, and to ascertain dates and isolated facts, of which there may be no other memorial extant. The merit of the work